# *John Buridan's Treatise* De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis*: An Edition*

DIRK-JAN DEKKER

## *Introduction*

The treatise *De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis* counts among the earliest works of John Buridan. It was written as a contribution to a philosophical debate at the university of Paris that began in 1331 and continued until 1334. The debate probably started with Buridan's metaphysical treatise *De diversitate generis ad speciem*, several conclusions of which were attacked by other Parisian *magistri*. In reply, Buridan wrote two new treatises. One of these, our *De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis* of 1332, deals with the ontological status of relations. The other, *Defensiones determinationis de diversitate generis ad speciem* of 1333, is a more direct defense of Buridan's original conclusions in *De diversitate generis ad speciem* and discusses the way genus and species are related to each other. Although we do not know whether these replies provoked any reaction of the opponents, it is certain that in 1334 Buridan honored the request to write one final treatise about the disputed topics; this is *De relationibus*.[1]

[1] About these works: Bernd Michael, *Johannes Buridan: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinen Werken und zur Rezeption seiner Theorien im Europa des späten Mittelalters*, Berlin 1985, II, 425-54; J.M.M.H. Thijssen, *Buridan on the Ontological Status of Causal Relations. A First Presentation of the Polemic "Questio de dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis"*, in: Albert Zimmermann and Andreas Speer (eds.), *Mensch und Natur im Mittelalter*, Berlin 1991, 234-55, esp. 236-7. *De diversitate generis ad speciem* is not known to have survived in any manuscript. Of the other works no complete editions have been published yet. A partial edition of *De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis* appeared in Thijssen 1991, 238-51. The edition of *De relationibus* was announced by Rolf Schönberger, *Relation als Vergleich. Die Relationstheorie des Johannes Buridan im Kontext seines Denkens und der Scholastik*, Leiden 1994, 372, n. 6. Buridan's *Quaestiones de universali*, also known as *De differentia universalis ad individuum*, which is another of his early 'polemical' works, was edited by S. Szyller, *Iohannes Buridanus, 'Duae quaestiones de universali'*, in: *Przeglad Tomistyczny*, 3 (1987), 135-78.

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It has been suggested that Buridan's so-called 'polemical' works originated in the context of formal academic disputations.[2] Our treatise shows some characteristics in structure, style and terminology that support this suggestion. Especially the structure of the author's *determinatio* with its *recapitulatio* at the end, and the formula-like declaration of sincere intentions may be mentioned here.[3] Buridan's opponents in *De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis* are two anonymous masters of arts at the university of Paris. One of them belongs to the Picard nation and is referred to as *Picardus*, the other belongs to the English nation and is called *Anglicus*.[4] Although a formal disputation was an affair of the *magistri* rather than of students, Buridan does refer to his students and his teaching practice several times.[5] The treatise also contains an interesting remark about Buridan's approach to authorities.[6]

The theme of the disputation is the ontological status of relation.[7] The questions at stake are whether causal relations add anything to the essence of the effect of a cause, whether the agreement or difference between two things is anything added to their essence, and whether relations of relations are possible. The structure of the disputation is as follows. Buridan begins by repeating three statements *conclusiones* that he had already put forward at an earlier occasion, probably in the lost

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[2] Michael 1985 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1), I, 245-6; Olga Weijers, *La 'disputatio' dans les Facultés des arts au moyen âge*, Turnhout 2002, 25-49.

[3] "Et protestor quod nihil mali intendo, sed solum addiscere et sustinere illud quod mihi videtur verum et alia quae ad haec sequuntur. Et supplico quod sit fas unicuique nostrum imponere alteri omnem metam inconvenientiae in speculativis, nihil tamen in moribus aut in fide." (p. 123, 11-15).

[4] Michael conjectured that the Picard master was Aegidius de Feno (the latinized name of Gilles van der Hoye), but Thijssen expressed doubts about this suggestion: see Michael 1985 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1) , II, 443; Thijssen 1991 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1), 237.

[5] For example: "declaravi coram scholaribus meis in legendo" (p. 142, 5-6); "et beani sciunt" (p. 131, 33).

[6] See in the recapitulation (p. 144, 19-24): "Tertio dicit [sc. Picardus] quod forte Lincolniensis fuit illius opinionis, nec oportet sibi credere. Et huic responsioni sibi acquiesco, quia nolo me in hac opinione fundare super aliquam auctoritatem, sive Lincolniensis, sive Averrois, sive Aristotelis, quia auctoritates faciliter exponuntur, et etiam ipsi fuerunt homines. Tamen plus vellem probabiliter eos exponere quam negare."

[7] Other places where Buridan discusses the same topic are: Iohannes Buridanus, *Quaestiones in Praedicamenta*, ed. Johannes Schneider, München 1983, 69-106 (qq. 10-14); Iohannes Buridanus, *Summulae: In Praedicamenta*, ed. E.P. Bos, Nijmegen 1994, 46-61 (§ 3.4); Iohannes Buridanus, *In Metaphysicen Aristotelis quaestiones*, Parisiis: Iod. Badius Ascensius, 1518, V, qq. 5-9 (ff. 29rb-32vb), esp. V, 6: "Utrum convenientiae et diversitates rerum ad invicem sint res sive dispositiones additae rebus convenientibus vel diversis" and V, 8: "Utrum causalitates sive effectuationes rerum ad invicem sint dispositiones additae illis rebus, causis et causatis".

treatise *De diversitate generis ad speciem*, and that apparently set off the opponents' criticism. He also provides a brief argumentation for these conclusions. Then the opponents take the stage. First comes the anonymous Picard master who puts forward five statements with arguments, then the anonymous English master carries in two more objections. After a short formula-like declaration of sincere intentions Buridan proceeds with his solution (*determinatio*). He summarizes the opponents' arguments and responds with five more *conclusiones*. The explanation of these five statements is the core of the treatise. Finally, Buridan summarizes the entire discussion.

Buridan's views regarding the ontological status of relation are summarized in the three conclusions that are given at the beginning of the treatise. First, the dependence of an effect upon its cause does not add anything to the essence of the effect. Second, if two beings agree in their essence, then this agreement does not add anything to their essence. Third, if two beings are in a relation of dependence, agreement or difference to each other, then this relation does not exist extramentally.

Both opponents involved in the disputation defend realist positions. Their purpose is to attack the first and second conclusion put forward by Buridan. The Picard master tries to show that the essence of an absolute being is not sufficient to explain its dependence upon something else. He argues that if this were the case, i.e., if things could be in a relation to other things just by being themselves, then we could not distinguish cause and effect. Therefore, something must be added to the essence of the effect in order for it to be the effect of a cause. Only if we are dealing with relative beings their relative essence is sufficient to explain their dependence and no further addition is required. In neither case is anything added to the cause, because the cause never depends on the effect, but always the other way round.

In a similar vein the Picard master tries to show that if two absolute beings agree or differ in nature, then their agreement or difference is something real that is added to each essence. In the case of two agreeing or differing relative beings, their relative nature already suffices to explain their agreement or difference.

The English master also attacks Buridan's conclusions. He tries to show that a dependency can be destroyed while the dependent being itself remains in existence. Therefore, dependency and a dependent being are really distinct from each other. Also, the English master denies that a relation can relate to another relation, because this would lead to an infinite regress.

In his response Buridan argues that relations can be founded on relations. We could think of the posteriority of Socrates' fatherhood with respect to Socrates as an example. There is no reason why relation could not serve as one of the terms, either *fundamentum* or *terminus*, of another relation. For example, let us say that a relation *a* (e.g., Socrates' fatherhood) is posterior with respect to its foundation *b* (e.g., Socrates). This posteriority, which itself is a relation, is founded upon relation *a*, for if it were founded upon *b*, then *b* would be posterior to *a* (which is absurd). Therefore, relation can be founded upon relation. Any objection that relation *a* and its posteriority are not two really distinct relations must fail, because relation *a* is a relation founded in *b* with respect to something really distinct (e.g., Socrates' son), whereas the posteriority is a relation with respect to *b*. Because both relations differ in their *terminus*, they are not the same relation. Having established that there can be relations of relations, Buridan argues that dependency, agreement and difference can be founded on dependency, agreement and difference. Also, if any of the latter relations were real (which Buridan denies!),[8] then any of the former relations founded upon it would also be real, i.e., not merely existing rationally.

Buridan also tries to show that the effect of a cause depends upon the cause by its very nature. His strategy here is to lead the opponents into contradiction or into an infinite regress. Suppose that an effect *a* needs something else than itself to depend on its cause *b*. Then how does this additional factor (let us call it *c*) come into being? The answer is that it must have been caused. But does *c* depend on its cause by itself or by cause *b*? If the latter were true, then the cause *b* would first cause the dependence of *a* before causing *a* itself, which leads to a contradiction. If the former were true, then an infinite regress would result. Therefore, *a* depends on *b* by itself, not by *c*.

In an effort to strengthen this conclusion Buridan discusses at length the counterarguments put forward by the Picard master and identifies six weak spots (*defectus*) in the English master's theory. The final section of the treatise is a recapitulation of the entire discussion, in which the three participants all take the stage once more.

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[8] Buridanus, *Quaestiones in Praedicamenta*, q. 10, ed. Bos, 71[52-55]: "Et ego credo istam opinionem esse falsam. Ideo pono conclusionem oppositam talem, scilicet quod non significantur per terminos relativos res aliae ab illis, quae significantur per terminos absolutos, nec termini relativi supponunt pro aliis rebus ab illis, pro quibus supponunt termini absoluti."

*Manuscripts*

Buridan's *De dependentiis* survives in two codices: Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibliothek cod. 291, ff. 163ra-172ra (siglum *K*); and Praha, Státní knihovna cod. VIII E 11 (Truhlář 1536), ff. 239r-249v (siglum *P*).[9] The Klosterneuburg manuscript was written in the 14th century, the Prague manuscript in or around 1419.[10] Manuscript *P* was not copied directly from *K*, because *K* has an omission due to homoeoteleuton that is not present in *P*.[11] In addition to our treatise, both codices also contain Buridan's *Defensiones determinationis de diversitate generis ad speciem* but no other texts that are related to the debate. I have checked in particular for the presence of any treatises that the opponents may have written in reply, but did not find any.[12]

Finally a few words about the critical edition. I have recorded all variant readings in the critical apparatus with exception of variants without difference in meaning, such as *ille/iste*, *ergo/igitur* etc. The reader will notice that, when both witnesses are at variance, the older manuscript does not always have the better reading. Therefore, I have decided to

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[9] Both codices are described briefly in Michael 1985 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1), 427-8. See also Joseph Truhlár, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Latinorum qui in C.R. Bibliotheca Publica atque universitatis Pragensis asservantur*, Praha 1914, I, 567. In this article I will refer to the Prague manuscript by its modern foliation rather than by the 15th century folio numbers which are partly preserved. In Thijssen 1991 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1), 235 an incorrect call number (VII E 11) is given for the Prague codex.

[10] Michael 1985 (*op.cit.* above, n. 1), II, 427; Praha, Státní knihovna, cod. VIII E 11, f. 238v (explicit of Buridan's *Quaestiones de universali*, written in the same hand as our treatise and immediately preceding it): "Expliciunt quaestiones magistri Iohannis Buridani de universali finitae anno Domini m$^{o}$ccc$^{o}$xix$^{o}$ ante festum nescio cuius et cetera."

[11] This homoeoteleuton, found on f. 171rb *K* (p. 146, 8 of the edition), also proves that the suggestion in Thijssen 1991 (*op.cit.*, above, n. 1), 237 that *K* might be the autograph, can no longer be upheld.

[12] Buridan's polemical *Quaestiones de universali*, preserved in both *K* (only qu. 1) and *P*, are not directly related to *De dependentiis, diversitatibus et convenientiis*, although they contain references to the latter treatise (Buridanus, *Quaestiones de universali*, ed. Szyller, 162$^{23}$, 169$^{18-19}$, and 175$^{28-29}$). The untitled and anonymous treatise known as *De natura numeri et unitatum*, attributed to Buridan and preserved in *K* (ff. 205vb-215vb), is not related either. Finally, manuscript *P* contains seven anonymous metaphysical *quaestiones* that do not seem to be related to the debate, although they treat similar subjects. Their titles are: (1) Utrum universalia sint maxime difficilia (f. 283v); (2) Utrum universalia sint priora secundum intellectum (f. 283v); (3) Utrum species sit magis principium quam genus vel e contra (f. 284v); (4) Utrum genus sit pars speciei et sit totum eius (f. 285r); (5) ⟨Utrum⟩ universale sit separabile a singulari (f. 285v); (6) Utrum in speciebus semper sit prius et posterius sicut videtur dicere Philosophus (f. 286r); (7) Utrum species sit nobilior genere (f. 286v).

adopt variant readings from both *K* and *P* in the text. Conjectures have been reduced to a minimum. I have adjusted the orthography of the text to the spelling of classical Latin (but with *u/v* distinction) and applied punctuation according to modern standards. Sources that are cited in the text have been identified as much as possible. References to Aristotle and Averroes in the sources apparatus are to *Aristoteles Latinus* and the *editio Iuntina*, respectively; references to Grosseteste's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* are to the Rossi edition.[13] Because this is the oldest text written by Buridan that is known to have survived, the quotations from Buridan's earlier works could not be identified.

Nijmegen
*Radboud University Nijmegen*
*Department of Philosophy*

[13] Robertus Grosseteste, *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, ed. Pietro Rossi, Firenze 1981.